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SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE FIRST GRADE OF THE FRANCIS W. PARKER SCHOOL

ROSE B. PHILLIPS

At the beginning of the fall term three social needs presented themselves to the first grade:

1. The making of a Christmas gift for home.
2. The planning of a pleasing curtain for our dressing-room.
3. Making candles for the kindergarten Christmas tree.

I. A CHRISTMAS GIFT

Plants to blossom indoors, and to blossom preferably at Christmas time, were chosen for gifts. After looking at flower catalogues, we decided that freesias and jonquils were best suited to our purpose. The children filled low four-inch bulb-pots with sandy loam from a field near the school, first putting in a small stone or two for drainage. Each child planted in his pot five of the kind of bulb he preferred. To make the gift a more complete one, we decided that bowls of clay should be made to hold the pots and plants.

The following reading-lessons, which were first written on the board by the teacher as the children told each step of the process, give an account of the work. These reading-lessons, with a kodak picture of the bowls and plants, and two working-plans of the bowls, made by each child for his use in the clay-room, were tied between stiff paper covers, as a book to accompany the gift.

FIRST-GRADE READING LESSONS

MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

In October we planted some freesia bulbs.

We planted jonquil bulbs, too.

These may blossom by Christmas.

They are for our mothers' Christmas gifts.

THE PLANTING

We planted our bulbs in flower-pots.
The pots are four inches wide.
They are two inches high.
We put stones in the bottom of the pots.
What was that for?
We filled the pots with sandy soil.
We planted the bulbs one inch deep.

PUTTING BULBS IN THE DARK

We put our bulbs in a dark place.
This was to let the roots grow.
Strong roots help to make strong plants.
The light makes the leaves grow well.
At first we watered the bulbs well.
The soil stayed damp.
We did not water them again.
We left them in the dark place for twelve days.

GROWTH IN THE DARK

We brought the plants from the dark.
We held them upside down.
We took the pots off.
We could see many roots.
They were all through the soil.
We put the plants into the pots again.
The freesia leaves were two inches high.
The jonquil leaves were one inch high.
The leaves were white.

PUTTING PLANTS IN THE LIGHT

We first put the plants in a dim light.
We watered them.
We left them there for two days.
Then they could bear sunlight.
We put them in a sunny window.
The leaves turned green.
We water them often now.
Look at this picture.
It shows how our plants look now.
The taller ones are the freesias.

ANOTHER PART OF MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

We are making dishes of clay.
The bulb-pots will be put into the dishes.
The dishes will be five inches wide.

They will be two and one-half inches high.

They will be dried.

They will be baked in the kiln.

They will be glazed.

They will be baked again.

The color will be light green.

II. THE DRESSING-ROOM CURTAIN

The entrance to our schoolroom has a dressing-room on one side, and a cupboard with glass doors on the other. The dressing-room has no door, the cupboard no curtains. To make this entrance more attractive was what we wished to do. Curtains for each place was the suggestion of most of the children, and was the only feasible one. Tan-colored linen was being used elsewhere in the school, and this was shown to the children. They liked it. We went to the eighth-grade room to see curtains of linen which the eighth grade had stenciled with pine trees. The first grade thought it would be nice to decorate their curtains in such a way.

We went to Lincoln Park to see what suggestions for decorations might offer themselves there. The park was beautiful that morning, and rich in suggestion. Beautiful leaves were picked up, and one of the park gardeners gave generously of flowers and curious seed-pods, as a result of his pruning in "Grandmother's Garden." We made several trips to the park, the school garden, and to fields near by. The children painted and drew trees, flowers, seeds, and vegetables. They then decided that leaves would make the nicest decoration for the curtains.

FIRST-GRADE READING LESSONS

THE DRESSING-ROOM CURTAIN

Our dressing room has no door.

All who come into our room pass the dressing-room.

We thought it needed curtains.

Tan linen was bought for the curtains.

We decided to decorate them with leaves.

CUTTING PATTERNS

We cut patterns of oak, maple, poplar, and willow leaves.

We pinned the patterns on a curtain.

We liked the oak patterns best.

CHOOSING THE COLOR

We had to choose the color for the leaves.
Leaves out-of-doors were red, green, and yellow.
We cut leaves of green and yellow paper.
We had no red paper of the right shade.
We pinned the yellow and green leaves on the curtain.
We chose the green for our leaves.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF LEAVES

We did not know how to arrange the leaves.
Each played a sheet of paper was a curtain.
With green crayon each arranged leaves on the paper.
We chose Adrian's arrangement.
You may see it on our curtain.

MAKING THE STENCIL

A stencil was cut from one of the oak-leaf patterns.
The stencil was cut in heavy, brown paper.
The paper was shellacked on both sides.
This was done to keep the color from passing through.
We painted the leaves on the curtain with green dye.
The dye was boiling while we painted.

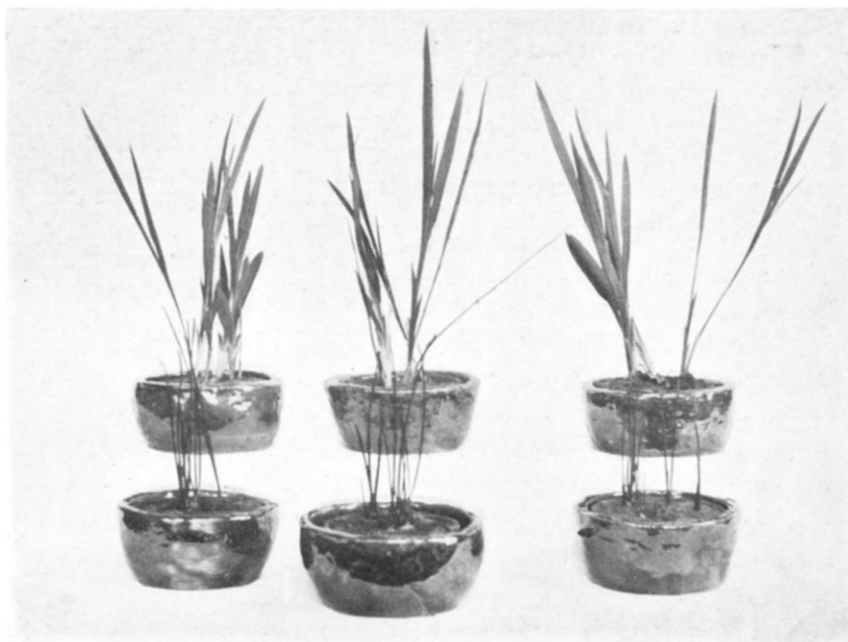
III. CANDLE-MAKING

The first thing to do was to choose the material of which the candles were to be made. Wax, paraffin, spermaceti, stearin, and tallow were shown to the children. Spermaceti and stearin were excluded on account of expense. To help in making a choice of paraffin, wax, or tallow, candles of each of these materials were burned. The paraffin flame was the largest, and that material was the one chosen.

How to make the candles was the next question. One of the boys said his father had read to him of boys making candles in bamboo canes. This idea was quickly taken up by the children and modified in various ways.

The children were asked to work out their plans at home. The result was candles made in five different ways.

One was made in a paper mold. A piece of heavy paper had been wrapped around the handle of a duster and the edges of the paper glued. Darning-cotton was used as a wick and the tube stood upright in a low tin can, being held in place by



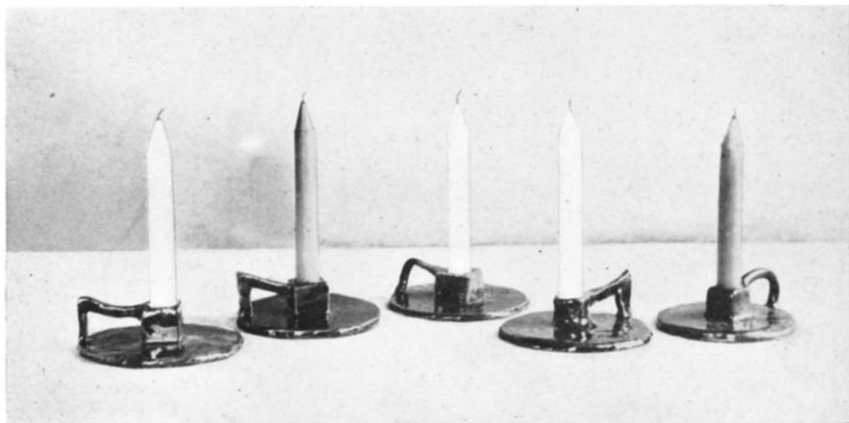
PLANTS AND CLAY BOWLS FOR "MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS GIFT"



CURTAIN SHOWING STENCIL DESIGN—FIRST GRADE



DIPPING CANDLES FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE



CANDLESTICKS AND MOLD CANDLES FOR VALENTINE GIFTS—FIRST GRADE

paraffin that had solidified around the tube. Paraffin was poured into the mold—the mold, of course, having to be broken to release the candle. Another was made in a bottle, and another in a wooden mold.

A wooden mold was made from a block $7 \times 2 \times 2$. A half-inch hole was made lengthwise, almost through the block. The block was split, and the two pieces fastened together with hinges and a clasp. (Help had been given in putting on the hinges and clasp.) A piece of string was used for the wick.

Another candle was made by dipping a piece of string in and out of wax repeatedly; another, by rolling paraffin, partly warm, around a string.

We liked the size and appearance of the dipped candle, and thought, too, that it was the easiest of the five ways shown for making candles; so it was decided to make the Christmas-tree candles by dipping.

Five pounds of paraffin were melted. Three wicks were tied to each of two sticks, nails being tied to the wicks to make them sink easily into the paraffin. These nails were cut off as soon as the paraffin stiffened the wick. Two dozen candles were made in this way.

The children thought they would like to make candles for home, so we planned to make larger candles, and candle-sticks of clay to fit them, as Valentines or Easter gifts.

The children were shown some tin candle molds. These they thought would make nice candles of just the right size. To the paraffin for these candles was added some stearin to make them harder. A candle made of paraffin alone will bend in a warm room.

The children drew plans for their candlesticks. They were then shown some simple candlesticks of good design, and their second plans were better.

Many wished that the candles might be colored. Green is the only color we have managed successfully. This is made by dissolving green and yellow aniline dye in stearin.

The candlesticks for the green candles were glazed green; for the white candles blue.